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## Top 10 Website Mistakes Green Industry Companies Make

Most green industry businesses will benefit from a website – if it’s done right. Below are the top ten things to avoid when building your website.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Talking to yourself                        | <input type="checkbox"/> No keywords, or the same keywords on each page |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Using default or no meta data              | <input type="checkbox"/> Very little, or “thin,” content                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Using your website as a “company brochure” | <input type="checkbox"/> Not submitting to local search directories     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No links from other websites               | <input type="checkbox"/> Not using tracking or analytics                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Few link to other websites                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignoring technical problems                    |

**1. Talking to Yourself** – How many times have you looked at a website and thought “huh?”. It’s clear that the website was designed and written with the business owner in mind, not the audience. While something may be interesting to you, the real question is “Is it interesting or useful to my customers?” If it isn’t, don’t include it!

**2. Using Default or No Meta Data** – Have you ever looked at the Google search engine results and been unable to figure out exactly what a listing is about? That’s because the meta data (e.g., page title, description) are either missing or garbage. It may seem like a little thing as you’re building your website, but without the right meta data to tell searchers what your site is about, no one’s going to visit it.

**3. Posting a “Company Brochure” Online** – Where a website really differs from print media is in the ability to generate immediate action that could lead to new business. Don’t just make your website a dry, factual, and passive experience for visitors. Engage them, excite them, compel them to action – whether that’s calling you, reading your newsletter, or forwarding your website to a friend. Leave the company brochure for your print campaigns and use the web for what it does best – engagement and interaction.

**4. Thin Content** – The days of the 300 to 500-word blog post or website page are long gone. Google’s algorithm now considers the *quality* of content on a website, such as how completely it addresses a specific topic, as well as the authority and trustworthiness of content across the website. Short, incomplete, simple articles are usually ignored or filtered out by the search engines. In a world where content is king, only unique, value-added content is going to move you up the search engine results.

**5. No Inbound Links** – Hmmm, why do no other websites point to yours? Usually it's the result of one of two things – (1) your website content is unappealing or (2) you've never asked for a link. Unique, interesting, relevant, frequently-updated content tends to attract links from other sites. Don't rely on the search engines to bring in all of your website traffic – inbound links from related sites are a great source of qualified visitors.

**6. Few Outbound Links** – There seems to be a fear that if you link to other sites, visitors will leave your site forever. Visitors expect outbound links – they see it as a measure of your website's usefulness and credibility. If there are no links, they wonder what you're trying to hide. And the search engines drop you down the search results. Keep your outbound links relevant and reasonable and you'll be rewarded for it.

**7. No Keywords, or Same Keywords on Each Page** – Many sites have no keywords at all, or even worse, use the same keywords on each page. While Google doesn't consider keyword tags when ranking sites, keywords do help *you* focus the content of your site and, more importantly, of each page. And Google *does* consider keywords used in the page content. Use unique keywords on individual pages and a combination of the most important keywords on your home page.

**8. Not Submitting to Local Search Directories** – If you're a tree care business with a local customer base, get your website and contact information included in the many FREE local search directories! Note that submitting to local directories is different from submitting to search engines – don't bother with search engine submission (and certainly don't pay for it).

**9. Not Using Tracking or Analytics Scripts** – If you're not tracking visitors to your site, how do you know what's working, what's not, and where visitors are going? How can you intelligently update your site to draw in more business? You don't need fancy statistics, but you do need to know where people are coming from, the search terms they're using, what pages they're hitting, how long they're staying, and what they're doing (like calling you or asking for an estimate). At a minimum, set up Google Analytics and Google Search Console – they're free.

**10. Technical Problems** – Many small business websites are built from a free template and/or are created by "my brother's son-in-law's cousin's kid." While the initial cash outlay may be small, the longer-term impact on the bottom line is typically negative. So many of these sites don't use standards compliant XHTML or CSS, have bloated code behind the scenes, don't use schema markup, aren't accessible or mobile-friendly, have multiple 'glitches', are difficult to navigate, can't be updated or scaled up, lack critical functionality, look unprofessional, have poor SEO, and the list goes on... Never underestimate the importance of technical knowledge and skills in creating a professional and fully-functional business website.

## **BONUS TIP**

Set up and verify your Google My Business profile. It's the 2<sup>nd</sup> most important thing you can do online besides your website.